

Who Wants the Olympics?

Opinion by Keith Baker, Contributing Writer *9-14-99*

Courier

SLOC spin-doctors were out in force after the public meeting in Heber with Mitt Romney several weeks ago. Attendance was poor, only about 50 people once SLOC staff and their hanger-ons (Sen. Beverly Evans, a County Commissioner or two, the County Olympic Planning Officer, etc.) were subtracted.

An article in The Deseret News said the small crowd attending the "Mittfest" (their word) showed that "troubled Olympic times are mellowing... [only last] year folks around here still had themselves riled up enough to come out in numbers." Note the innuendo in this statement. It wasn't SLOC's perfidy, bribery, illegal acts, wasting money, destruction of the environment, giveaways to its buddies, bloated budgets, and generally stupid planning that gets folks riled up. No, folks here in Wasatch Co. just rile themselves up for no reason, and now they've finally learned to behave.

How about this, Mitt? Could be that people didn't come to your song-and-dance because they knew that's what they'd be getting. They have learned that SLOC is going to do what it wants to do, no matter how it damages the local community and regardless of what the local community wants. Could be that folks around here are resigned to being stuck with the Olympics and with SLOC doing things their way, and they think there is no point wasting their time coming to anymore meetings.

Could be they just want the Games to hurry up and get out of town so they can try to put their lives back together. Could be they hate the Olympics, but think they can't do anything about it. That's a good reason to stay home. Mitt didn't even serve refreshments, and last year they had pop and cookies.

The Mittfests are a classic example of what Tom Wolff described in "Mau-mauing the Flack-catchers" — send some guys in pressed shirts with impressive job titles out to pretend to hear the public's problems, then go home and do what you intended to do all the time. This is supposed to make us feel good—that some overpaid big shot condescended to dirty his hands with the ordinary folks for an hour.

I suspect that a lot of folks around here hate the Olympics, and with good reason. There are too many reasons to hate the Olympics to list them in one column. There will be more to come, but let's get started.

First, SLOC gave Earl Holding, the second richest person in Utah and a member of the SLOC Board, \$18,000,000 to turn Snowbasin into a destination resort, and that assures Snowbasin's post-Games economic future.

Then SLOC gave the State \$40,000,000 for a trust fund to keep the bobsled, luge, and skating rinks going after the Games. SLOC took care of Davis Co., Salt Lake Co., and Utah County. SLOC didn't give Wasatch Co. diddly-squat for

Solider Hollow's future.

Second reason. Instead of building a second Olympic Village for the cross country athletes in Wasatch Co., SLOC recently changed the plan and is now going to put them in hotels. That will fill up just about all the hotel space in Heber Valley. It makes no difference to the hotel owners who pays them during the Games, but it makes a big difference to the rest of the businesses in Heber Valley, such as they are. The big spenders—the audience—won't be able to stay in Heber Valley because the jocks took all the rooms. Everyday after the competition, the big spenders will go back to Park City or to Salt Lake—back where they are staying—to shop, eat, drink, buy souvenirs, and party. That's where they will spend their money, not in Heber Valley.

The big spenders will roll right through Wasatch Co. in their buses and live it up elsewhere. They will eat, drink, sleep and be merry in Park City or Salt Lake. They will spend money like there is no tomorrow in Park City and Salt Lake, not in Wasatch Co.

Not only has Wasatch Co. no future after the Olympics, it won't have anything except traffic jams during the Games.

Somebody at Mittfest asked how Heber Valley, pop. 11,000 was going to cope with 22,000 visitors a day for 17 straight days in the middle of winter. When it snows. This question got the usual

SLOC answer: Not to worry, it's no more people than Swiss Days.

That's two days in the middle of summer when the traffic ties up every road between Park City and Provo, cars park in yards, in fields, on the street, in the street, and on every piece of unfenced pavement and dirt for miles around. Swiss Day's with snow on the ground is a prescription for gridlock. Swiss Days in snow is going to be a monumental mess.

SLOC's plan seems to be to turn the rodeo grounds into a giant parking lot and ship everybody to Solider Hollow by bus, on a shuttle fleet of several hundred busses imported from Omaha.

People of Midway! Look at a map. There is only one road between Solider Hollow and the rodeo grounds in Heber—Midway's Main Street. Do you think Mitt plans to let you drive on your Main Street when he needs it for his flotilla of polluting, fume spewing buses? Hang on to those survivalist supplies that you won't need for Y2K. You're going to need them for the Olympics, when you won't be able to get out of town for half a month.

SLOC gave Wasatch Co. \$400,000 to assist with Olympic preparations. Now the County's Olympic Planning Officer wants the County to kick in another \$200,000—that's your money, not SLOC's—mainly to boost his entertainment budget. Do you think it's worth it? *z*

- 11:00 am Justice Center/Public Safety
- 12:00 noon Heber Valley RR—Lunch
- 1:00 pm Dessert in Chalet Park
- 1:45 pm Soldier Hollow Olympic Venue
- 3:00 pm Tour Deer Creek State Park
- 4:00 pm Heber Valley Elementary School
- 5:00 pm Barbeque Dinner at Homestead
- 7:00 pm Midway Town Hall meeting

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Mike Kohler, County Commissioner

Greetings. I am writing on behalf of the County Commission to discuss openly the "Utah Open and Public Meetings Act." This law defines a "meeting" and details which meetings are open and which meetings are closed to the public. The County Commission proceeds from the general rule that all meetings are open to the public. However, as with any general rule there are exceptions

First, a chance or social meeting between county commissioners is not a meeting under the Act. Second, the Wasatch County Commission has both legislative (policy-making) and executive (day-to-day operation) responsibilities. The Open and Public Meetings Act recognizes that when commissioners shoulder the day to day operations of the county, they need to talk. If not, the

business of government would grind to a halt. When the commissioners get together to discuss or implement administrative or operational matters, it is not a "meeting" under the open meetings law, so long as no money is appropriated and the matters discussed require no formal action by the Commission.

Under limited circumstances, a closed meeting is permitted. Some of these circumstances are 1) meetings to discuss the character, professional competence, or physical or mental health of an individual; 2) meetings to discuss pending or reasonably imminent litigation; 3) meetings to discuss the purchase, exchange, or lease of real property or the sale of real property; and 4) investigative proceedings regarding allegations of criminal misconduct.

The County Commission is committed to doing its work in open and public meetings. Notice of these meetings are published in the newspaper and available at the County Building. Detailed minutes of these meetings are kept and made available through the Wasatch County Clerk's Office and on the county web-site. The Commission is committed to keep you informed of any and all meetings and to keep you abreast of government activities. Finally, we are always available for suggestion and comment through telephone, e-mail, or otherwise. **W**

Mike Kohler

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Wasatch County Republican Party Meeting

The Wasatch County Republican Party Central Committee will hold its regular meeting on Thursday, 17 September, at 8 pm in the Wasatch County Building on Main Street in Heber. The Central Committee is the governing body of the party in the county and the meeting will be mainly to discuss party business, including the principles and platforms on which the party operates. The Central Committee is composed of

members elected at the caucus or precinct meetings held biannually in March and the county convention.

An upcoming item of interest will be the Presidential Primaries which will be held for the first time in the State of Utah in March of 2000, only six months away. The primary will be by party and will be open to registered party members and unaffiliated voters. The mechanics of the operation of the primaries will be

another discussion item.

With all of the interesting events occurring in Wasatch County, this would be an excellent time and place to be further involved in your community. The meeting is open to the public and all interested people are invited to attend. For further information contact Chairman Bob Wren at 654-4667 or Vice Chairman Steve Smith at 654-4816. **W**